

## **April 8, 2010**

### **Shabbat Shalom!**

*The Torah portion this week, Sh'mini, noted that if the priestly leaders and the Israelite people followed certain rules for ritual and for diet, they would instill a sense of dedication and spiritual purity that would allow them to recognize God's presence among them.*

*What is it that we can do that can give us a sense of a divine presence in our lives, or a feeling that "godliness" and a spirit of holiness pervades our community? Several years ago, the Gallup organization, the Gallup organization developed a list of nine items that, when taken together, tend to show a person's level of spiritual commitment, regardless of his or her faith tradition. Among the people they surveyed, they found that 15% of all of those questioned answered "strongly agree" to all the nine items presented to the respondents. Here are those items, with my own Jewish-based commentary:*

- ***I spend time in worship or prayer every day.***
  - *This can include services at Temple, but we may also recite words of our own choosing or long-established Jewish blessings when we are "at home and on the way."*
- ***My faith is involved in every aspect of my life.***
  - *Judaism can touch upon a wide range of issues, from our economic and occupational values and decisions to interpersonal relationships. A teaching like "love your neighbor as yourself" has implications for nearly everything we do.*
- ***Because of my faith, I have forgiven people who have hurt me deeply.***
  - *We learn the importance of forgiveness every Yom Kippur, but prayers for forgiveness are part of daily Jewish liturgy, reminding us to constantly find ways*

*Jewish liturgy, reminding us to constantly find ways to make amends and be forgiving.*

- ***Because of my faith, I have meaning and purpose in my life.***
  - *There are many pursuits in which we are involved that give us meaning, purpose and direction. Judaism offers us a sense of connection with all humanity, with all of creation and with the Creator of all. Seeing a challenge from a more godly perspective can help us through a difficult time.*
- ***My faith has called me to develop my given strengths.***
  - *The rabbi Ben Azzai stated, “Despise nothing and call nothing useless, for there is no one who doesn’t have his/her time, and there is no thing that doesn’t have its place.” We should value ourselves because every one of us can make a difference!*
- ***I will take unpopular stands to defend my faith.***
  - *There is almost always at least one issue in society for which Jewish tradition offers a crucial departure from conventional wisdom. As we approach Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, we recall the courage of all those who sustained the values of respect and understanding in the face of unbridled hatred.*
- ***My faith gives me an inner peace.***
  - *Our prayers for peace are intended to help us strive for peace between people and inside ourselves.*
- ***I speak words of kindness to those in need of encouragement.***
  - *Offering words of support is an act of lovingkindness, gemilut chasadim.*
- ***I am a person who is spiritually committed.***
  - *Each of us has our own ways of determining if we feel connected to our faith and heritage, and if we see ourselves as “spiritual.” Do your own inventory. Look at these nine items, and think about the ways in which you try to develop your own*

*the ways in which you try to develop your own strengths, show forgiveness, find peace in your mind and heart, take a stand based in our heritage, connect with the divine, and create a meaningful and purposeful path for yourself every day. May our upcoming gatherings as a community inspire us to remember, laugh, to love and to live as we strive towards contentment, freedom and peace.*

***-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry***